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Impactful scholarship in intelligence: A public policy challenge

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Introduction: Open lessons from a closed path

Intelligence has long been described as the missing dimension in international relations, and whilst this had more than a kernel of truth in 1984 - when Christopher Andrew notably wrote it - the same cannot be entirely said now. The study of intelligence, as an academic field, continues to grow, as does the public's fascination with it. Yet lots of gaps remain, often for good and necessary reasons. Indeed, in terms of research access to certain types of privileged materials, intelligence studies has much in common with international trade, international taxation, other types of elite government activity which are covered by the need for confidentiality and competitive advantage. The 'othering' of intelligence is partly done to ostracise it as part of the wide range of government activities or to defend it from attention: either way the necessary obfuscation of intelligence is unhelpful to the public understanding of this important area of government activity. Just as iumportantly, the layers of secerecy have historically ensured that the intelligence community is insulated and denied access

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(intentionally or otherwise) to the world of academia and all the research resources and findings inherent to it.

This paper primarily concerns the impact academia can have on the government's analytical function.[2] In doing so it aims to speak to several important agendas for researchers engaged in the arts, humanities and social sciences aiming to generate 'research impact' and relevance. Narrowly, it aims to make an evaluation of generating impact with the UK's government's central machinery for analysis, and it does this via a series of UK research council funded projects, collectively known as 'Lessons Learned'. More widely, the paper aims to speak to agendas of those seeking to engage with government and a public accountability both for the research council money we secured for this project, but also in terms of how academia has been engaging with government. We will also present our analysis of the business of 'impact' and why these activities present enduring challenges to individual scholars, universities and end-users.

The central project we focus on is known as the 'Lessons Learned' project, and it has gone through four iterations, beginning in 2008. It was initially funded by an internal university grant which covered the development of a requirements-led seminar series held at the Cabinet Office and Foreign Office.[3] This then became an AHRC-funded project that was run in conjunction with the Ministry of Defence and the Cabinet Office to provide advice on developments in academic literature, as well as support requirements-led papers and seminars. For the third iteration, we made applications to our respective university's enterprise projects to secure funding for a fractional appointment to work on matching government needs and

[2] It should be noted that 'intelligence analyst' is now a recognised government vocation and profession: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/civil-service-intelligence-analysis-profession/about accessed, 7th November 2016.

[3] This series was the basis for our book: Dover, R & Goodman, M (2011) *Learning Lessons from the Secret Past* (Georgetown University Press: Washington).

academic capabilities. For the fourth iteration, the AHRC funded the project again, this time partnered only with the Cabinet Office, and had a tighter set of terms around the provision of policy-related academic papers and seminars, but with the addition of the right of initiation of projects from the academic organisers. We refer to these four iterations collectively as 'Lessons Learned' because they all retain the core concepts of: 1) matching government analysts with appropriate academic expertise, 2) providing open-source challenge to government, and 3) promoting interchange between the two communities that ensured the relationship incorporates sufficient elements of uploading as well as downloading to and from the academic community.

Methods and Methodological Challenges

This paper is written from our perspective: that of two UK-based and tenured scholars who have run an almost decade-long impact project, by which we mean a project exclusively designed to deliver research impact as per the UK's Research Excellence Framework (REF) guidelines, as they existed for the REF2014 exercise.[4] The evidential base of this paper is formed from three principal sources: 1) the extant literature surrounding impact and policy engagement, 2) the evaluations that the authors have made from the project through its various iterations, and 3) from seventeen interviews conducted in the summer of 2016 with Whitehall officials who have been stakeholder participants in the project, by which we mean they have engaged with scholars through their respective government departments, via the project. We have also interviewed the two accountable officers for the project within Whitehall, who have not participated in the project in the way our seventeen interviewees have.

[4] Please see: HEFCE, REF2014 Assessment Criteria, http://www.ref.ac.uk/panels/assessmentcriteriaandleveldefinitions/ accessed 7th November 2016.

The challenges and problems with this methodology are clear. Being the academic convenors of the project does not provide the usual amounts of observational distance that one would normally expect from this kind of research exercise. And our rationale and defence for proceeding with the methodology in spite of the problems and challenges are partly in the light of the results, and partly public-interest. In terms of the results, we found - and will make clear during this paper - that the Whitehall participant stakeholders were not uncritical of us, or the project, or indeed of how the senior Whitehall officers had discharged the project. So, our post-hoc rationalisation is that our proximity to the research interviewees did not produce a significant softening or tailoring of the message to ameliorate the interviewers; indeed, they saw it as an opportunity to help to shape future iterations of projects in order to try and maximise the instrumental utility they could derive from them. We present the findings from the interviews 'as if true', rather than to try and contextualise or shape them in a way that would insert our undue proximity into the presentation or positioning of them.

'What is impact?': Impact vs Consultancy or Contract Research

A survey of the professional higher educational journals such as *The Times Higher*, and indeed a good deal of peer review output on the subject, would lend itself to the conclusion that the 'impact agenda' is both controversial, highly contested and - for a significant segment of the social scientific and arts and humanities academic community - at best 'difficult' and at worse misalignment to their values and perceived purpose. Even in 2017 we have observed clear gaps in academic departments between those who do, and do not 'do' impact. Perhaps this is why the REF expectation is so low: on average 10% of all research should have an impact agenda.

So, what is impact? The simple message was that it was value generated *beyond* academia. The agreed formula for REF2014 ran along the lines of: there was research, and that research then appeared in a peer-reviewed outlet and was assessed to be at least 2* quality, that is which is recognised internationally. That research then transformed itself (and the pathways to impact go many different ways at this point) into being of interest to a policy maker (but other stakeholders would meet this definition) who then uses it directly or in a way that can be audited, to generate change. There are a great many difficulties with this: the academic needs to know what policymakers are interested in; they need to have access to the policymaker, or at least be able to get their research to them; they need to be assured (somehow) that the policymaker will take note of the academic, read their research, and somehow engage with it. All of this begs a question: should the impact narrative drive the research, or vice versa? The underlying problem, issue of access aside, is time: one study, which reviewed all 7,000+ REF2014 Impact case-studies, concluded that the average time to move from initial identification of a research question to the demonstrable evidence of impact is 17 years![5]

The rules for the next REF exercise in 2020/1 – following the Stern Report – are likely to soften the requirement for direct linear impact, which is likely to align the auditable concept of impact with real world realities. A number of importance change will result from this: impact can be based upon an academic's body of published work and the reputation created, rather than a single output. Similarly, it might be that the publication results from the impact, rather than preceding it. It is also possible that there will be a move torwards interdisciplinary impact, with case studies produced partly within the relevant Unit of Assessment, but also within the Insititution. In short, there is much yet to be decided, and while it is clear that the remit and

[5] J Grant, 'The Nature, Scale and Beneficiaries of Research Impact', 2015. Available at: http://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/policy-institute/publications/Analysis-of-REF-impact.pdf (accessed 16 January 2017).

paramters are going to change, the fact is that the value derived from and importance attached to impact generation will grow.

It should be emphasised that consultancy and contract research were excluded from the agreed REF2014 impact formula, because even if these underpinning contractual arrangements are used to create original research, the impact criteria dictated that a publication must precede the impact. Such a formulation ignores a decent amount of intellectually interesting contract advisory work that occurs via university enterprise departments and which creates new knowledge in support of public policy transformation or transformation that is appropriate to the commissioning organisation.[6] The lessons learned by the scholar(s) involved in the contract work about the applied variants of the subject and/or about the organisations they are working for would invariably make for valuable additions to the extant literature: within REF2014 guidelines these would likely to be lost to the field.

It is also important to note that within the 'lessons learned' project we actively approached the scholars for this work – rather than issuing an open call – based on two criteria: 1) subject matter expertise, and 2) a track record of communicating their research to policy officials or those outside of academic circles. A loosening of the criteria around the sequencing of impacts, as suggested for REF 2020/1, would provide for potentially more interesting and more numerous case studies, it would remove some of the need to 'gamify' or artificially contrive impacts where they do not naturally sit. We faced the challenge of this criteria with those who contributed to the 'lessons learned' project and settled upon a pattern of contributors editing and revising existing research for the Whitehall stakeholders than to create original research to task, as this fell outside of the impact criteria.

[6] It should be noted that in the 12th January 2016 edition of the Times Higher statistics were presented indicating the amount of this activity currently taking place in British universities was diminishing: Matthews, D (12 January 2016), 'Academics shun engagement with business', *Times Higher Educational Supplement* (London).

Impact as change agency

The core values of the impact agenda are really about introducing discovery-led, or research-informed change. In politics and international relations that change will be predominantly, but not exclusively, in the realm of organisational reform, or policy / legislative change. As referred to earlier in this piece, we know from the numerous articles in the *Times Higher* and the *London* and *New York Review of Books* on this subject, that not all scholarship naturally lends itself to generating these kinds of impacts, and those scholars who have written about impact negatively have pointed out that they are or fear negative career repercussions for not being able to comply.[7] These concerns clearly have some foundation and merit, but less well specified are the challenges for those enthusiastically engaging in time-intensive impact activities which are that the materials and lessons learned are not always publishable, and the activity itself might draw one away from purer forms of the discipline, where the 'quality' or 'prestigious' journals sit. This is certainly the case for those engaged in impact work with the security community, however broadly defined.

In terms of a remedy for this set of conundrums it might be prudent for university managers to introduce smarter ways of measuring key performance indicators across a department, a university or a field. Much as academic promotion can occur within research dominant or teaching dominant modes, it should be the case – if we are to take impact seriously, without imposing negative incentives on scholars – that we can appropriately measure and

[7] Head, S (13 January 2011) The Grim Threat to British Universities, *New York Review of Books* (New York).

recognise impact endeavour too.[8] Our experience of Whitehall officials through the 'lessons learned' project is that most policy stakeholders do not understand (and nor should they) the incentive structures in place at universities (on almost any level), nor that the production of an article for a 'quality' journal is more valuable to the academic than anything else. The misalignment of expectations between academic and end-user is unhelpful to furthering the relationship, and thus generating more meaningful impacts, but can be easily remedied through a contract research route. The submission of contract research, or advisory pieces (of an appropriate length) to the REF that might be judged by practitioners as well as academics might be one way of addressing the negative incentive structures in place for impact currently, and would help to align academic and practitioner expectations.[9] Indeed, there is an interesting symmetry to 'impact'. We have discussed the academeic aspects, but policymakers also focus on impact: showing that their work, assessments and reports have some sort of 'impact' on policymaking.

The Mechanics of Impact with the Security Community

This second part of this paper focuses particularly upon the mechanics of impact relationships with the security community. The practical business of government intelligence and security exists, for the most part, in necessary secrecy, and consequently there are additional challenges to recording impact than might otherwise be the case with less security focussed parts of

[8] It should be noted in this respect that King's College London, for instance, has introduced a career promotion path through 'innovation', which is designed to reflect these concerns. How it will work in practice and what its measurement criteria are remains to be seen.

[9] The ESRC already provide for this with its 'Impact Acceleration' grant. The AHRC only has a provision to fund further engagement in the form of 'Follow on Funding', but this is reliant on the applicant already having an AHRC grant. Often these sort of 'enabling' grants do not need to be big, but nonetheless a financial incentive is useful to both academics and universities.

government. There has historically been a measure of ad-hoc interaction between the UK government's analytical community with individual academics and, of course, with those in privileged or knowledgeable positions outside of the community, but without the necessity to acknowledge that work. Our interviewees from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence, Department of Work and Pensions, and Defence Science and Technology Laboratory pointed to ad-hoc arrangements they had with informal networks of academics or research clusters to support their activities.[10] Universities – being public institutions, albeit funded in an increasingly private way – are a key source of knowledge and innovation for the country. It is not new territory to make the case that there are untapped synergies between academia and the security communities.

Value derived and Impact generation

Driving our approach were a series of considerations about how both communities could derive mutual benefit and, by extension, generate impact: (i) Engagement with academics who have conducted research on similar topics to those being investigated by intelligence analysts using open source data has the benefit of providing **critical checks and balances**, as well as enrichment of a fragmentary dataset; (ii) Engagement between academia and analysts from a closed intelligence community provides **a forum for challenging conventional wisdom** and assessments made largely on the basis of intelligence, and to reduce mirror imaging and group think in a unique forum; (iii) Engagement with academia provides a valuable **analytical resource**: it can provide trends analysis based on statistical data capture applicable to a range of thematic topics using both random and structured sampling; and (iv) Engagement with the academic community may serve to **enrich knowledge and the intelligence picture**; providing information and knowledge left gapped by intelligence coverage.

[10] Interview B, Interview F, Interview I, Interview J, Interview K, Interview M, Interview N, and Interview P.

Definitions of intelligence vary considerably. The classic definition was provided by Sherman Kent nearly seventy years ago. Kent's definition divides intelligence into three parts: intelligence as knowledge, intelligence as an organization, and intelligence as an activity.[11] This gives us some insight into the nature of intelligence: it is an organizational activity that produces knowledge.[12] Both the intelligence and academic communities seek to advance knowledge and to do so via the selection of, and discrimination between, various sources of information. Both communities try to make robust assessments that have utility in the real world. As such, both spheres share a common core purpose, albeit delivered to different ends. Nearly all of our interviewees recognised this shared knowledge creation purpose, and fourteen made a positive case for enhancing the links between academic and policy spheres, whilst nearly all suggested a lack of practical focus or application by academics, which suggests that the academic community has to work harder to convince practitioners of their direct utility.

For the less sensitive areas of government, interaction with the UK's academic community has been widely encouraged. There have been successive moves in central government to encourage civil servants not only to seek outside expert views, but to have the implementation of policies tested by expert outsiders. In 2013, the UK Government established a network of seven independent centres to inform government decision-making through the provision of independently assessed evidence. The 'What Works Network' covers a range of policy areas, including: crime, health care, social care, and education. Amongst others, the *London School of Economics* acts as a host for the *What Works Centre* dedicated to looking at

[11] Kent, S. (1949) *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*, Princeton University Press

[12] There is a clear dichotomy revealed in the competing definitions of intelligence between intelligence as an organizational entity or machinery and intelligence as an end product. These two perspectives can successfully combine by analogy with the phases of and requirements of analysis as an activity. Analysis is a detailed examination of the elements or structure of an object or concept in order to provide knowledge or add to a previous body of knowledge. The perspective of intelligence as an organization can be resolved as a machinery geared around the production of an analytical end product for the purpose of being action guiding. The most developed definition of *intelligence analysis* is by Rob Johnston from his ethnographic study into analytical culture in the US in 2005 (Johnston, R (2005) Analytic Culture in the US Intelligence Community: An Ethnographic Study, (CIA: Langley). Johnston defined intelligence analysis as: *the application of individual and collective cognitive methods to weigh data and test hypotheses within a secret socio-cultural context*. This definition focuses entirely on the process of intelligence analysis, but arguably does not provide any component that separates this definition of intelligence analysis from the definition of the process of analysis beyond the inclusion of secrecy.

local economic growth.[13] In 2015, the *What Works initiative* expanded further in its outreach to academia by establishing a *Cross-Government Trial Advice Panel*, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.[14] The panel, comprising twenty five academics, was established to educate civil servants in the use of experimental and quasi-experimental research methods.[15] By 2015, a considerable infrastructure had been put in place by the Cabinet Office to encourage civil servants to seek external expertise, including academia, to inform a wide range of policy making areas under the *Open Policy Making* initiative, using the 'latest analytical techniques, and taking an agile, iterative approach to implementation'.[16]

These clearly demonstrate significant effort by the UK Government to utilise external expertise from, amongst others, the academic community. However, engagement between the spheres of policy making and the academic community is unlikely to be replicated at an equal scale between academia and the national security community, largely due to the obvious requirement for secrecy and the protection of sensitive information. Interviewees from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Metropolitan Police Service and DSTL pointed to the problems inherent in handling or sharing classified or protected materials, and the length of time taken to get approvals to share.[17] However, two major reviews into issues of National Security have highlighted the importance of more engagement between the two spheres. In 2004 the first major review into the intelligence underpinnings of the Iraq war (*Review of*

[13] UK Government (August 2015), The What Works Network, HMSO: London https://www.gov.uk/guidance/what-works-network (accessed 6 November 2015)
[14] The ESRC is one of the national research councils, funded centrally but administered outside of government control.
[15] Cabinet Office (2015) The Cross-Government Trial Advice Panel, HMSO: London (https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/451336/the_Cross-Government_Trial_Advice_Panel.pdf (accessed 6 November 2015)
[16] *UK Government (2015), Open Government Blog, https://openpolicy.blog.gov.uk/tools-and-techniques/* (accessed 6 November 2015)
[17] Interview B, Interview D, Interview I.

Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction, more commonly known as the *Butler Report*)[18], made several recommendations encouraging the value of engagement between the national security community and academia. The first recommendation was to provide an outlet for analysts within a closed national security community to challenge conventional wisdom, received options and assessments based largely on actively gathered intelligence. It was from this recommendation that the 'lessons learned' project sprang, and the benchmark against which we set for the project.

Our ineraction has included a number of disparate aspects, funded by a variety of bodies. They include several ESRC and AHRC-funded seminar series which brought together academics and government security practitioners to have structured discussions around the development of intelligence activity in the 21st century. The more significant interaction occurred via an RCUK Global Uncertainties grant in partnership with the Ministry of Defence and the Cabinet Office. The grant was used to commission academic research into subjects of use and relevance to both departments. Topics were either pre-selected by the government, or via a process in which topics could be suggested. The principal findings were based upon the use of 'contemporary historical' events (ranging from 60 years to a few months) for two purposes: reflecting examples of good and bad analysis with the objective of identifying process lessons; and, to use the history and evolution of a given event to provide high level context to an ongoing issue. The research output was exhibited in two ways: the publication of an edited collection of papers by Georgetown University Press called *Learning from the*

[18] In February 2004, HMG announced the creation of a committee to investigate intelligence available to the UK's intelligence community regarding WMD programmes in countries of concern, to investigate the accuracy of intelligence on Iraqi WMD leading up to March 2003, and to examine any discrepancies between this intelligence, and information discovered by the Iraq survey group following the end of the Iraq war. Lord Butler published the findings of the review in July 2004.

Secret Past; and the publication on the AHRC's Policy Publications site of a series of commissioned reports.[19]

Taken together, the benefit to be accrued from these provides the potential to reduce the cognitive biases of 'mirror-imaging' and 'group-think', allowing analysts to discuss assessments and theories with subject matter experts who may provide a different perspective based on a different body of source material. Whilst not formally part of the challenge function another aspect of our involvement – the *King's Intelligence Studies Programme* (of which one author leads and the other has been involved) – is a good example of a higher education platform where government analysts are encouraged to move beyond the tunnel vision of their specific day jobs to reflect upon their activity in a wider context.[20]

Engagement with academia for the purpose of challenge analysis may benefit a closed national security community by providing an additional avenue for systematic and structured challenges. An interviewee from the MoD suggested that a greater level of systematisation was required to see real value come out of the exchange. Without that level of system - they argued - there would only be piecemeal exchange, which might be useful on a case by case basis but would not add significant value.[21] Whilst there is a wide difference in research methodology across different areas of academia, it can be broadly said that professional academics will have achieved a high degree of proficiency in terms of research practice, critiquing evidence and argument through doctoral training, peer review, and professional engagement within the academic community. There are certainly de-minimis standards for UK PhD students in research intensive universities - that is driven by research council recognition - around research

[19] http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/innovation/knowledgeexchange/kewithpolicymakers/publications/ (accessed 16 January 2017)
[20] Goodman, M & Omand, D (2008), What Analysts Need to Understand: The Kings Intelligence Studies Programme, S*tudies in Intelligence*, 52/4 (December 2008)
[21] Interview J.

training and the rigours of peer review enforce these standards for career academics. Butler recommended that challenge analysis should be a systematic function of the UK's intelligence assessments: "Challenge should be an accepted and routine part of the assessment process as well as an occasional formal exercise, built into the system."[22] Whilst we have aspired to embed such a system, by pushing it from the academic side, we have little evidence that this is occurring within the practitioner community.

The second key benefit outlined by Butler is the potential for widening the range of information available to the analysts within the closed national security community: "We emphasise the importance of the Assessments Staff and the JIC [Joint Intelligence Committee] having access to a wide range of information, especially in circumstances where information on political and social issues will be vital."[23] Academics within research-intensive universities are likely to have more time in which to produce in-depth assessments and have the freedom to conduct structured fieldwork.[24] Further, the range of sources of information available to academics, unencumbered by any restrictions of official secrecy, is potentially wider than that of a closed national security community. In our dealings with Whitehall and other law enforcement communities (broadly defined) there have been significant challenges for officials to get hold of research materials that academics think of as their bedrock, such as electronic journal holdings (JSTOR and similar), which are blocked by financial and structural

[22] Butler (2004), 'Review of Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction', Page 146, Chapter 7: Conclusions and Broader Issues, 7.3 JIC Assessments

[23] Butler (2004), 'Review of Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction', Page 153, Chapter 8: Summary of Conclusions, Chapter 5: The Use of Intelligence

[24] This conclusion needs to be tempered with the realities of university life, which are increasingly focussed around teaching requirements (even in research intensive institutions) and fluctuating workload requirements across the calendar and academic year. It is a strong misperception amongst those outside of academia that there is a uniform bandwidth and availability of faculty to engage in extraneous research tasks – the additional institutional pressures around funded research means that engagement with government, which is often poorly remunerated or unpaid, attracts a lower priority than might ordinarily be the case.

considerations, and that when access is granted, the size of these databases are often overwhelming for the analyst fresh to them.

Following extensive consultation within the intelligence community and external subject matter experts, the *Blackett Review of High Impact Low Probability Risks* (2011) identified several recommendations to strengthen the government's approach to assessing strategic shocks which could, in turn, be applied more widely across government. While the recommendations of the *Blackett Review* built upon the practices that existed within the community, one of the key factors in the review was the need for the UK Government to include a greater measure of external expertise in their assessment processes. Of the eleven recommendations identified by the *Blackett Review*, six concern engagement between closed intelligence communities and academia, three of which were specifically addressed to the Cabinet Office, where the central analytical function of the community sits.[25] *The Blackett Review* highlighted many benefits for the intelligence community of engaging more fully with the academic community: *to inform key risk assumptions; to inform judgements and analysis; to better detect early signs of strategic shock or surprise; to inform the development of internal and external risk communication strategies*, and; *to strengthen the scrutiny of the National Risk Assessment*. Although these recommendations were identified in the context of a specific type of risk assessment, the recommendations are widely applicable to other areas of assessment and analysis across the UK Government, and should be seen in their widest context. [26]

The range of possible benefits that can be imputed through the *Butler* and *Blackett* reviews are certainly sufficient to warrant a further and deeper exploration into the operational

[25] The central analytic function within the Cabinet Office in regard to intelligence analysis is the Joint Intelligence Organisation.

[26] To note that there is now a Horizon Scanning Programme Team within government for whom these recommendations would uniquely apply: https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/horizon-scanning-programme-team accessed 7 November 2016.

elements of an enduring relationship between the two communities. Part of that analysis comes from making a comparison between fundamental elements of the activities of the two communities, and part comes from understanding where the differences in source information and methodological approaches may lead to limitations in engagement. Elsewhere we have explored these issues in depth, but the bottom line is that each community has much to gain from the other.[27]

The Benefits of Greater Engagement

Our interaction with the security community has extended for more than a decade. Based on this long and continuing engagement, a number of important benefits can be identified in trying to get the two communities to work together more effectively. This section will consider these, as well as highlighting some of the obstacles that need to be overcome or, at least, borne in mind when considering such engagement in the future.

As argued in the Butler Report, the main benefit to the closed national security community from enhanced cooperation comes in the form of *challenge analysis***.** Engaging with individuals who have conducted research on similar topics using open source data has the benefit of providing quality control, corroboration or confirmation methods, as well as the enrichment of the national security community's fragmentary dataset. In this way, and if organised effectively, engagement with academia offers a closed national security community the benefit of an additional open source capability drawn from organisations specifically geared to

[27] Dover, R; Goodman, M & White, M (2017), 'Chapter 25: Two Worlds, One Common Pursuit: Why Greater Engagement with the Academic Community Could Benefit the UK's National Security' in Dover, R; Dylan, H and Goodman, M (Eds)(2017) *The Palgrave Handbook of Security, Risk and Intelligence* (Palgrave: London).

providing all source analysis. Systematic engagement with academia may also provide the benefit of external peer review, particularly on technical issues.[28] It is a shame that there is no intelligence and security version of the UK Defence Academy's Staff College (an idea that was initially mooted by academics to the Professional Head of Intelligence Analysis (PHIA) in 2008 and subsequently published in IISS's Strategic Balance) as a means by which to place these symbiotic relationships on a firmer footing.

A related area of potential benefit is in the provision of an alternative avenue of *corroboration and validation***.** Engagement with the academic community offers the government's analytical community a substantial intellectual resource capable of providing key contextual insight. This can be provided in the following ways:

1. Trends analysis based on statistical data capture applicable to a range of thematic topics using both random and structured sampling. Similarly, with qualitative research methods, of historical trends and essential context.
2. Corroboration or validation from academic research that has undergone more rigorous testing and research techniques.
3. Corroboration or validation from academic research conducted at a more granular level in terms of topic matter.
4. Corroboration or validation analysis from academic research derived from a wider or alternative pool of information.

[28] Butler (2004), 'Review of Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction' Page 146, Chapter 7: Conclusions and Broader Issues, 7.3 JIC Assessments

Finally, a key benefit is the *enrichment of knowledge and the intelligence picture***.** The national security community's necessity to respond to short-term customer-placed requirements will inevitably leave significant gaps in the knowledge generated by intelligence coverage. Whilst the knowledge enrichment that can be provided by academia is likely to be more contextual and environmental than the core business of intelligence, it still has its necessary place and value in the ability to correctly interpret information about other regions and cultures.

The government's national security community could quite feasibly increase its contacts across a wide range of disciplines, research organisations, universities and think tanks both in the UK and abroad. In doing so, it may be able to leverage or influence the direction of researchers without necessarily having to provide funding, although the reciprocity of the relationship is likely to have to be proved over the medium term to sustain such an arrangement. Access to the views of the national security community on mutual topics of interest, and the chance to use academic research to inform and impact upon decision-making on issues of national security, is likely to be incentive enough to achieve involvement from a sufficient portion of the relevant academic community.

However, the benefit of engagement is not all balanced on the side of the national security community. Academia and academics stand to benefit in several ways through closer interaction between the two worlds. Like the national security community, the first benefit to academia comes in *corroboration and challenge analysis*. For academics, engagement with individuals who are analysing similar topics using classified data has the benefit of providing them with informal measures of quality control, corroboration or confirmation to academic hypotheses and judgements. Similarly, to the benefits that a closed analytical community could derive from engagement with academia, academia may gain the benefit of external peer review,

the reduction of their own collective group-think and mirror imaging, and the provision of a unique arena for challenging from those with unique and unrepeatable data sets. However, this is obviously heavily contingent on the ability and willingness of a closed analytical community to be able to communicate assessments in confidence at an unclassified or open level. Such willingness is very closely aligned with issues of trust. This will be dependent on the internal risk versus benefits assessment of the closed analytical community, and places the academic in a supplicant position as regards knowing or understanding the quality of information they are receiving.

The second benefit comes from the *enrichment of knowledge.* Where a closed national security community could benefit from being able to close information and knowledge gaps by steering or influence academic research, the academic community can equally gain from this process by being given a unique insight into areas of research that would have impact and benefit for national security and official policy. This could provide a high impact for future academic research commissioned or approved by academic funding bodies and higher education institutions. Even outside the formal requirements of the REF, there is a pressure within academic departments to be connected more with external stakeholders, and thus for most academics, whilst the intellectual advantages of engaging with the national security community will be very real, the necessity and demand to be impacting on the practitioner community will also play a part in driving engagement with the national security community.

Navigating the Divide: Overcoming Obstacles and Developing Best Practice

The crossover of the two communities is not without fundamental pressures and tensions: it does not necessarily follow that scholarship can be directly applied to the business of the

national security community. Academic output is not geared to directly influence decision-making or government policy, nor is it necessarily written in a way that assists the official in making such decisions. Gaining the maximum benefit of closer interaction between academics and government analysts is likely to require sensitive negotiation. There are three key complications or obstacles to engagement between the two communities: *the need for secrecy*; *the need for speed*; and, *the changing requirements of the intelligence community*.

The simplest, and arguably most effective, forms of engagement are those involving in-house talks, lectures and discussions either held at a location in the academic community, or within the national security community. These events may be of varying size, depending on the complexity of the topic, the range of subject matter experts available, and the level of interest. It is reasonable to assume that specifically tailored and structured in-house events could offer high-level cost effectiveness in terms of the time available to government analysts. In this way, engagement between the two communities takes the form of a flexible liaison resource with the ability to gain high impact tailored to specific targeting.[29]

Allowing academics to record their engagement, and indeed the impact of their engagement with the national security community, generates a separate set of challenges. Garnering evidence of impact – mostly through reference letters provided by national security community practitioners – is more challenging in this area because of the restrictions on operational data and a general cultural disposition to retaining, rather than broadcasting

[29] More ambitious forms of engagement are possible, but are more challenging. A pool of academics cleared to an appropriate level, working as research fellows, either inside the national security community or outside could offer a reliable 'on-tap' service to this group of practitioners. The problem here is one of scale, and thus of cost. Scaling across a wide enough spread of disciplinary areas is expensive both in terms of the number of bodies, but also in terms of recruitment, vetting and counter-intelligence costs. However, making a case for the added value of this arrangement will be difficult, because it will necessarily be a prospective case and cautious managers are likely to prefer to recruit fully formed security analysts than the slightly riskier proposition of academic fellowship holders. Asking universities to find the costs for these research fellows, when the knowledge they have acquired will be unpublishable will be a difficult ask, particularly when university budgets are so pressed.

information.[30] So, there is a need for an alignment between individual scholars, universities and REF assessors and the national security community to understand a common set of frameworks to record the engagement in a way that does not breach the Official Secret Act, but allows enough indication of the impact the scholar made. Without that alignment, there will be a smaller pool of potential contributors than might otherwise be the case, limiting the added value academia can bring to national security.[31]

Summary

There are many synergies and benefits to be drawn for both the national security and academic communities from working more closely together, and not a single interviewee suggested that the relationship should be more remote or not exist at all. There are also some significant challenges to be faced in embedding the relationship further, and these challenges threaten to overshadow the utility of the engagement. A number of important points emerge:

The recommendations of *Blackett* and *Butler* strongly suggested a systematic approach to academic engagement, but this has yet to be achieved in any meaningful way, even with the presence of the 'lessons learned project'. Whilst praising the underpinning rationale and specific products to come out of 'lessons learned' many interviewees suggested that it only produced piecemeal success precisely because it had limited funding, product was only available through a requirements-led process and because of the security-controls required for proper Whitehall engagement.

[30] It is also our experience that some Departmental and university leads struggled - sometimes - to understand what these letters meant.

[31] Within the REF there is a mechanism to submit classified work, but this is difficult to manage and not always straightforward to incorporate into broader narratives.

Whilst 'lessons learned' provides one avenue through which Whitehall officials can access academic expertise, help and support, it was clear at the time of the interviews that the lack of process around how to approach academic support generally, was source of frustration to officials. Many of our interviewees pointed to practices of approaching their own contacts or academics known to other colleagues, or that they scanned academic conference programmes for relevant people.

Our interviewees wanted more iterative and ongoing support than the production of a context piece or discreet essay that constitutes open source challenge. For the 'lessons learned' project this was clearly a challenge beyond our remit or funding, but for the wider issue of academic engagement it clearly is essential. The challenges that come with this are security vetting, line management, university management alignment, and that currently there are no incentive structures in place within academia to promote this as a valuable way of working for academics. The issue of secondments, internships, and the equivalent or 'reservist' status came through our interviewee pool time and again. Several interviewees suggested that forms of partnerships could and should be formed with universities that would allow for a more systematic exchange, from the notion of an independent hub to discrete partnerships with universities, as can be seen with GCHQ's arrangements with the University of Bristol, currently.

Whilst this essay has largely focussed on research impact, there are clearly further benefits in education and training opportunities within the UK's university systems to members of the intelligence, security and law enforcement community.[32] The King's College London partnerships with the Ministry of Defence at the *UK Defence Academy* and the *Royal College*

[32] Goodman, M & Omand, D (2008), What Analysts Need to Understand: The King's Intelligence Studies Program, *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol.54, No.2.

of Defence Studies have produced very strong research and professional exchange (built upon a long history of interaction with academia) and should be replicable by the national security community, even if only in a virtual form due to the financial resource required in such initiatives.

In research terms, the benefits of the collaboration between the security community and academia are mostly instrumental in nature: improved information resources, methods and validation techniques for both communities. Some of the benefits can be located in professional enrichment: from working with skilled professionals from outside of a respective community bubble, and in improving professional techniques. However, significant barriers to developing a closer relationship between the two worlds are likely to remain: security, timeliness, money, organisation and motivation are hindrances that require a recalibration of existing relationships, culture and system. The clichéd claim that these changes need to occur solely in the national security community are too simple. Changes are equally required in individual scholars, their universities and the funding councils, with the emphasis falling on the last two. Yet, the intellectual justification for trying to square these bureaucratic circles, and the benefits that stand to be gained by both worlds, are considerable. Enhanced engagement between the two worlds is already increasing, with the development of a security research hub, hosted by a consortium of universities led by Lancaster University, and - as previously noted - in the academic boards being established in the MoD and FCO as well as the NCA's Specials Programme.[33] Such initiatives have the power to alter the course of research undertaken by the fields of intelligence studies, defence studies, and international relations, increasing and enriching the pool of knowledge available to inform national security decision-making. Despite

[33] Lancaster University, (2015) National Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats, http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/security-lancaster/news-and-events/news/2015/national-centre-for-research-and-evidence-on-security-threats/ accessed 5 November 2015.

some difficulties and obstacles in managing an engagement relationship between academia and the national security community, in an era of diversifying national security threats to the United Kingdom interaction between these two worlds should be the rule, rather than the exception.

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Interview A -

Interview B

Interview C

Interview D

Interview E

Interview F

Interview G

Interview H

Interview I

Interview J

Interview K

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